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SUBJECT: MAURITANIA'S RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENTIAL  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT REQUEST

REF: STATE 112468

¶1. (SBU) In response to Reftel A, Post will establish an interagency working group chaired by DCM Dennis Hankins and coordinated by Economic Officer Stephen Kochuba to promote the vision of President Obama's proposed Entrepreneurship Summit. Other members of the working group will include representatives from Post's political and public affairs sections, as well as inter-agency members representing the Peace Corps, the U.S. African Development Foundation and a USAID representative when USAID returns to Post.

¶2. (SBU) Post will use the Presidential Entrepreneurship Summit as a public diplomacy tool to highlight Post's re-engagement with the newly elected Mauritanian government and to promote America's commitment to business development in Mauritania. Following the 2008 coup d'etat, Mauritania lost its status as a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) threshold country and AGOA beneficiary. As a result, the announcement of the participation of Mauritanian citizens in this summit will assist Post's ongoing public diplomacy efforts to demonstrate America's continued support for development of the Mauritanian economic and commercial domains, despite Mauritanian's removal from the MCC and AGOA programs. As an initial event, Post plans to invite our nominated business leaders for an informal coffee hour hosted by the Ambassador to openly discuss challenges and opportunities that exist for Mauritania's business community. This type of event will send a strong signal to influential business leaders that the Embassy is committed to working with the Mauritanian business community. A small and personalized event will resonate with Mauritians and encourage them to share additional ideas and suggestions for future events and activities to support the goals of the Entrepreneurship Summit. Post will also consider using appropriate and available spaces on the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) for creative individuals in the business realm who have not previously visited the USA. Returning individuals on the IVLP program and participants in the Presidential Entrepreneurship Summit will be welcomed back in an official capacity by the Embassy to recognize their participation, and these events will include media coverage to highlight the objectives of the programs.

¶3. (SBU) Post canvassed representatives from multiple Embassy sections to develop a list of appropriate nominees for the proposed summit. The individuals were carefully selected to represent a diverse, but balanced range of political views, ethnicities, industries and strata of Mauritanian society. To be sure that a variety of economic backgrounds were represented, a number of nominees may need financial support to attend any events held in the USA.

¶1. Abdel Qadous Abeidna: Mr. Abeidna is a 40 year old businessman and intellectual from a prominent Mauritanian tribe. He attended Columbia University in the USA and is fluent in French, Arabic and English. He is one of the

rotating presidents of the political group Front National pour la Defense de la Democratie (FNDD) and was a prominent voice of opposition to the military coup d'etat of 2008. Mr. Abeidna serves on the board of directors of some of Mauritania's largest private companies and his family owns a number of prominent businesses. He is active in the humanitarian field with his personal NGO, Medecins du Desert, which provides free medical care to impoverished residents in rural Mauritania.

¶2. Lemat Mint Sid Ahmed Megueya: Ms. Megueya is a leading Mauritanian businesswoman and President of her own company, L'etablissement Lemat Mint Megueya. She is also the president of the Mauritanian Union of Female Entrepreneurs, which works to promote the role of women in the business sector. After making a proposal to the President of Mauritania, Ms. Megueya lead the development and construction of a prominent market for goods produced by Mauritanian women.

¶3. Moulaye Sidi Mohamed Ould Abbas: Mr. Abass is the President and General Manager of one of the largest private banks in Mauritania, BMCI. He is in his mid-thirties and took control of BMCI bank after the death of his father, a self-made business man and founder of BMCI. Mr. Abbas speaks fluent Arabic, English and French and studied in both France and the USA. Concerned by the lack of opportunities for young Mauritians, he is launching the Mohamed Abbas Foundation (named after his late father), which will be a charitable organization designed to support young and creative Mauritanian businessmen and women.

¶4. Diagana Mohamed Hadiya: Mr. Hadiya is in his late 20s and fluent in French, Arabic and English. He is a prominent,

young Afro-Mauritanian business leader. He has a degree in industrial electronics from Dakar, Senegal, and a Diploma in Cost Accounting from the Chamber of International Commerce of Geneva, Switzerland. He is the manager and a large shareholder of AFRICASIA Sarl, a company established to import and export motorcycles and electronic and industrial parts from Asia. He is a member of the Association of Young Mauritanian Entrepreneurs.

¶5. Amadou Birane Baro. A prominent Afro-Mauritanian intellectual and business leader. Mr. El Bechir speaks Pular, English and French. Mr. El Bechir studied a variety of Business Administration subjects in Lille, France and studied and taught in Columbus, OH. He was an assessment and evaluation coordinator in the Columbus Public Schools in ¶2003. He returned to Mauritania to work as the director of quality hygiene security and development with the prominent Mauritanian transport logistics company SOGECO. He also is the director of an after school program for Mauritanian youth.

¶6. Kane Mamadou Elimane: Mr. Elimane is a prominent Afro-Mauritanian intellectual and entrepreneur in his late 20's. He speaks fluent French and Pular, and intermediate Arabic. He has a Master's degree in Private Business Law from the University of Nouakchott. He is the co-founder of AKB Services, a private company specialized in maintenance and cleaning of buildings and offices. He has been particularly active in public health campaigns, working with UNICEF to supervise a nutritional survey for rural areas of Mauritania.

¶7. Leila Bouamatou: The daughter of one of Mauritania's wealthiest and politically connected businessmen, Ms. Bouamatou is both an intellectual and a businesswoman. She studied at the American School of Geneva in Switzerland, as well as in France and Spain, where she obtained a Master's of Business Administration with a focus in financial accounting. She speaks fluent Arabic, French, English and Spanish. Only in her mid-twenties, Ms. Bouamatou is the head of the treasury department at the Generale de Banque de Mauritanie (GBM), one of the largest commercial banks in Mauritania. She is extremely well-connected and is passionate about educational opportunities for young women in Mauritania.

¶8. Marieme Mint Mohamed Saleh: A former employee of the BMCI bank, Ms. Mohamed Saleh left to establish her own import/export company in Mauritania. Beginning in January 2009, she will also take over as the head of the newly established BMCI-financed Mohamed Abbas Foundation, which will aim to educate young Mauritians in business practices and then finance their small business start-ups with small business loans from BMCI. The goal of this organization is to find young and creative Mauritians interested in developing businesses in the technology and creative fields, which are currently under-represented in Mauritania.

¶9. Mohamed El Hassen Boukhreiss: Mr. Boukhreiss is a U.S. college graduate and currently works as the director of Finance at the Ministry of Economics and Development. The Ministry of Economics and Development is a powerful ministry in Mauritania, and Mr. Boukhreis works closely with the Minister himself. His inclusion in the program is important as he is an effective public servant, and he will serve as a representative of the Mauritanian government. He is fluent in Arabic, French and English and has demonstrated a willingness to work closely with Americans and the U.S. Embassy in his work at the Ministry.

¶10. Sokhna Ly Ba: Ms. Ba holds a Master's degree in Socio-Economics from the University of Paris in Nanterre, France. She currently works in the equivalent of Mauritania's Social Security Agency. She is an accomplished Afro-Mauritanian woman who designed Mauritania's first micro-finance lending programs in close cooperation with the U.S. Peace Corps program in the mid 1990's. In 1997 Ms. Ba was recognized for her work to promote women's rights in Mauritania by the United Nations Population Fund. She has also been granted a rare letter of commendation by the Mauritanian Inspector General. Ms. Ba's previous and continued work in the Mauritanian microfinance realm places her in a particularly valuable role to influence the reduction of rural poverty through business development.

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